

T/SOL/3/56/20

solidarity

DOUBLE
ISSUE

for workers' power vol.8 no.2

6p
~~10p~~

FORD: "OCCUPATION" AT
DAGENHAM

NEWS from SINGAPORE,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA, BRAZIL

LETTERS, REVIEWS

THE MEANING OF THE
YUGOSLAV REPRESSION



EDITORIAL COMMENT

ONCE MORE, FOR THE RECORD:

A REPLY TO CRITICISM

Systematic misrepresentation of others' positions is a technique of political sectarianism with an unfortunately long history. We have come to expect that fights will be picked with us on the basis of things we haven't said, and arguments will be adduced to refute points we never made; but when this sort of 'criticism' is disseminated to people who may not know much about Solidarity's politics, we have to try to set the record straight.

Misrepresentation is currently focused on the question of self-management. 'Workers' Voice' no.13 (c/o Box W.V.4., 48 Manchester St., Liverpool L1 6ER, price 5p.) contains the following statement, in a footnote to an article by Revolutionary Perspectives of Glasgow:

'The historical bankruptcy of organisations which see the revolution only in terms of forms is illustrated by the group SOLIDARITY for whom Communism has no content, only the forms of workers' councils and self-management. Thus they were able to write enthusiastic article (sic) on the Ulster Workers Council, which was an expression of deep divisions in the proletariat, and also wax enthusiastically (sic) about the Lump in the building industry, as a bit of self-managed workers' capitalism. Here as elsewhere communism as formal recipes can only serve the bourgeoisie.' (pp. 14-15, note 2).

The only documentation given for these slanders takes the form: 'Solidarity's gems can be found in their magazine of the same name, and in their pamphlet "The Lump".' No address. No page references or issue number. Those who would like to form their own judgment can obtain the Lump pamphlet from us, or from the National Working Group (price 15p), and can find out whether it is a mindless celebration of the phenomenon, or an attempt to analyse a feature of contemporary society instead of reacting with intellectual labour-saving labels.

Similarly, the controversial editorial on the Ulster Workers Council General Strike ('Solidarity', vol.VII, no.11) brought a predictable response from Republican sympathisers for whom any attempt to look rationally at Protestant workers' action must be by definition a capitulation to bigotry (see letter from M. Comack, vol.VII, no.12, p.17). Far from being uncritical or waxing enthusiastic, however, the editorial tried to analyse the components of the strike and its implications in all their complexity, going a little deeper than the obvious remarks about deep divisions in the proletariat. The last paragraph reads:

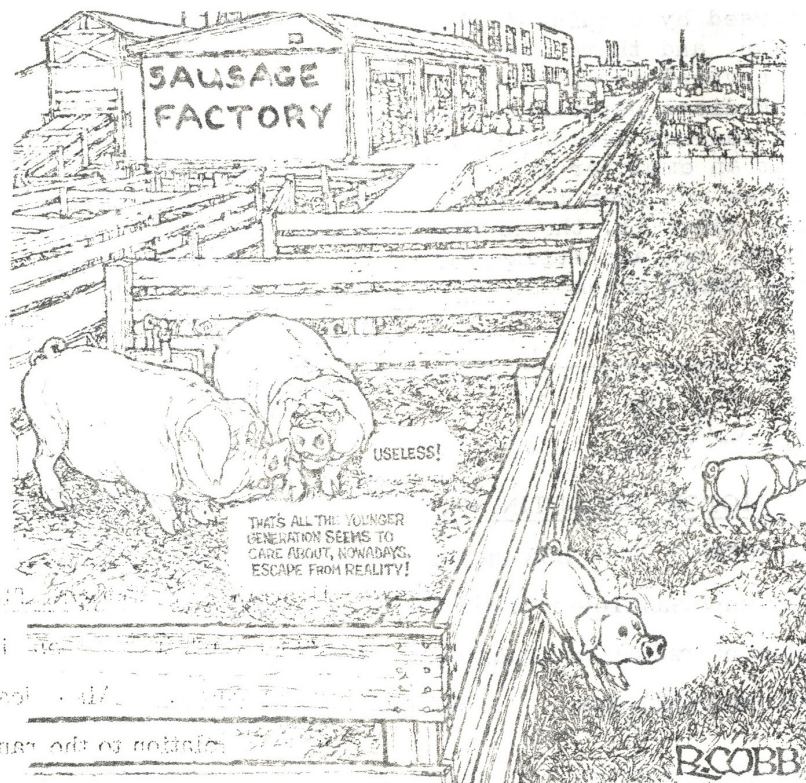
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This re-edition of our previous pamphlet was produced by the Philadelphia Solidarity Group (hedgehogs still there). 40p + postage



ON THE SOLIDARITY WAVELENGTH

In previous issues we have referred to the responses abroad to various of our pamphlets (Sweden: vol.VII, no.4; Japan: vol.VII, no.5; France: vol.VII, no.7). This is what has happened in Germany.

The appearance of Solidarity texts in German was delayed for a considerable period, the left movement being dominated by maoists (all calling themselves 'marxist-leninists') and very orthodox anarchists. This is strange because both libertarian marxism (from Rosa Luxemburg to Otto Ruhle and Karl Korsch) and the politics of sexual revolution (Reich and the post-Reichians) have had a considerable audience. Perhaps through fear of patricide few German texts have dared criticise marxism from a modern revolutionary viewpoint.

In April 1971 the now defunct Verlag Roter Oktober published an incomplete version of The Bolsheviks and Workers Control: 1917-1921 under the title of 'Räte in Russland'. Our introduction and conclusions (in which most of our political points were made) had been cold-bloodedly omitted...because the publishers disagreed with them! They were subsequently to be published in issues 6, 7, and 8 of Revolte (current address: 205 Hamburg 80, Hassestrasse 22). The comrades who produce this interesting and lively paper broke from orthodox anarchism a few years ago and have been strongly influenced by the Situationists. They have translated and published a number of Solidarity texts, including Ceylon: the JVP Uprising of April 1971 ('Aufstand auf Ceylon') and Redefining Revolution ('Postskript zur Neu-Definition der Revolution'). These have appeared as MaD (Materialien, Analysen, Dokumente) pamphlets Nos. 3 and 6. These comrades were also the first to publish in German a text on the Saigon Commune (first published in Informations, Correspondance Ouvrières and later in Solidarity, vol.V, no.5). Our pamphlets Paris, May 1968 and Vietnam: Whose Victory? will be published later this year by the same group.

Our basic statement AS WE SEE IT was first published in German in November 1971 in issue no.2 of 'Die Soziale Revolution ist Keine Partei-sache' (the Social Revolution is no Party Matter), the journal of the now defunct 'Soziale Revolution' group in Berlin.

Schwarze Protokolle (c/o P. Ober, 1 Berlin 30, Welserstrasse 3), an anarcho-marxist paper published the second half of The Irrational in Politics in its issue no.5 (July 1973). In its issue no.6 (October 1973) it published AS WE DON'T SEE IT in full. In a later issue (no.124 (sic!), January 1974) it reproduced the article Third Worldism or Socialism (which had also appeared as an Appendix to the Revolte edition of the pamphlet on Ceylon). Finally the text on Workers Councils and the Economics of a Self-managed Society was published by Verlag Neue Kritik (Frankfurt) under the title 'Arbeiterräte und selbst-verwaltete Gesellschaft' - but, we regret to say, minus the hedgehogs!

DISSENT IN YUGOSLAVIA

'FROM AFFLUENCE TO PRAXIS'. Mihailo Markovic. Ann Arbor 1974. £2

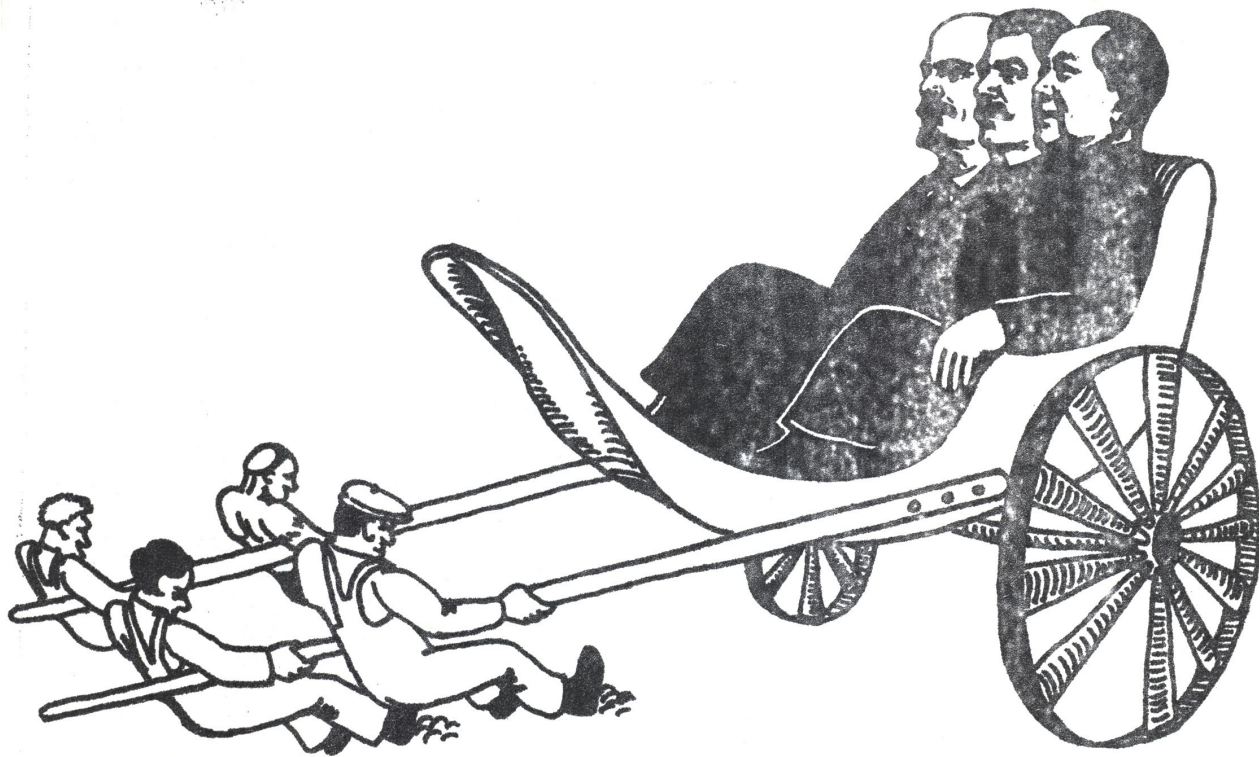
'BETWEEN IDEALS AND REALITY'. Svetozar Stojanovic. Oxford University Press, New York 1973. £1.40

Recently, severe repression against 'dissidents in Yugoslavia has recommenced on a large scale. In early March the author Mihajlo Mihajlov was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment for 'anti-state propaganda'. More significantly there has been the recent round of state action taken against students and lecturers in universities throughout Yugoslavia. News of the draft resolution of students in three Philosophy departments (complaining that they had been prevented from studying marxism) was suppressed by the state authorities. The internationally renowned journal 'Praxis' has been closed down. A long campaign against 8 lecturers in the Belgrade Philosophy Faculty has culminated in their suspension (on full pay) from teaching. In the statement 'On the ideological and moral fitness of Professors at Belgrade University' and in Tito's recent speech, the lecturers were treated as enemies of the state and as 'people who tried to block us'.

Only a small section of the work of the Belgrade lecturers has appeared in English. It is therefore of great significance that these two books have been published.

Markovic introduces 'From Affluence to Praxis' with a critique of positivism and the related attempt either to replace formal logic with 'dialectical logic' or, inversely, with a total refutation of the logic of dialectical analysis. Instead, he bases himself on critical consciousness and on a clear differentiation between social and natural processes. Social institutions are created by human agencies. They are 'thus potentially free'. In Markovic's words, 'In the legitimate effort to establish certain social laws, there has always been a tendency to reify these laws, to construe them as if they were independent of human action, and to forget that they are only the expression of certain regularities of human behaviour'.

This is the real break that distinguishes Markovic from the mechanical marxism of the Second International, including leninism, and also from Western bourgeois science. 'Both past and future are living in the present' he adds, in order to show that there is no possibility of returning to the safe dogmas of historical fatalism. Positively, Markovic asserts that from affluence to praxis there are many changes. Although he is not unique in this, his views are refreshing.



His premises stated Markovic continues (in his first chapter on 'Critical social theory in Marx') by outlining his general thesis. Freedom is the recognition of concrete forms of oppression, criticism of them, and eventually their overthrow. In the cases of history and of nature 'overthrow' is impossible - but increased control is not. Markovic develops a well-rounded and coherent categorisation of Marx to accomplished the required criticism. There are both concrete and abstract phenomena (e.g. wealth and surplus value respectively). Concepts are either negative (alienated labour), neutral (work) or projective (praxis/ideal human activity). According to Markovic, several conditions have to be met before one can use Marx's model of the economy, as outlined in Capital. Many of these preconditions have long since disappeared, but what remain are the conceptual categories outlined above.

Perhaps the most impressive chapter of the book is that entitled 'Economism or the humanisation of the economy'. Here Markovic makes numerous points of great significance to radical political economy, based on the Hegel-Marx idea of alienated labour. As the State expresses purely private (class) goals, it cannot be the repository of some public good, potentially or actually. It can only be the rationalisation (in both practice and ideology) of class society.

Markovic takes a rather narrow view of the State when applying himself to Yugoslavia. The three alternatives to the State that he presents are all managerial and not social-economic models. He attacks the ideologists of the meaning of commodity production. Those, like Stalin, who advertise a

'socialist commodity production' are shown to be self-contradictory. Either there is commodity production or there is socialist production and distribution. There can be no transitional state for commodity production because it is the heart of bourgeois economy. But socialism is not just the suppression of commodity production. Already the bourgeois states have partially modified the nature of this production through public works and nationalisations. These have varied from stalinist or social-democrat set-ups to fascist ones: in none has there been anything other than the reinforcement of the class goal of production. The thesis that capitalism is the generalisation of commodity production is dismissed by Markovic in his model of Capital (pp.67-68).

'CRITICAL THEORY' AND REVOLUTION

Markovic then turns his attention to Easter-style exploitation in his chapter on 'The concept of revolution'. Since revolution is a question of possibility (and not just necessity) and of understanding (and not just knowledge), formal changes in the State, in the economy and in society are all essentially non-revolutionary. This has been the reality of Eastern Europe. Exploitation survives in a wider sense than outlined by Marx.

Markovic delineates two stages of communist revolution:

- 1) the establishment of a classless society and the abolition of the State.
- 2) the abolition of commodity-production.

But he sees complications. Peaceful change is and can be possible. He gives the examples of Marx's hopes for England and Holland but adds the rather sad examples of Chile and Sweden. He further states that in the East 'bureaucracy cannot be abolished by force ... what is needed ... is a critical science, a new revolutionary culture' and a creeping expropriation of the economy.

All this is reformism, but it is a reformism that is fundamentally different from social-democratic or leninist reformism. It is based on the false concept of communist revolution in two phases. As the State is nothing other than the rationalisation of the extremes of commodity production, its fall has to be simultaneous with the expropriation of the economy. Markovic's dual thesis is one in which one moves from formal to substantial changes. This is false: nearly all revolutionary movements have had a content before they ever developed a form. The power of workers councils is not some formal or managerial abolition of the State: it is the expression of the communist revolution itself.

Markovic's views are obviously deeply influenced by Yugoslavia. But his analysis of self-management is threadbare and his belief that the self-management system can become something new and revolutionary is confusing. To demonstrate that the Yugoslav system could itself be revolu-

tionised, one would have to show:

1) that the future could develop out of the institutions of the present;

2) that the necessary qualitative changes could be produced by the quantitative changes of extending self-management.

This all hinges on the old belief of changes in quantity causing changes in quality. Markovic gives an example when he says that the bureaucracy is slowing down the transformation of social relationships and not really altering them. The mechanistic association of quantity with quality does not have very much bearing on these situations.

The author concludes with a chapter on 'The new human society and its organisation'. He categorises three types of project - positivist, utopian and critical. The first is dismissed as allowing only for quantitative development, and the second for making the future absolute without criticism of the present. It is the third, critical project that shows that the fettered social relationships can be broken by social revolution, by the absorption of the individual being (abstract being) into social being. Markovic compares this with the Yugoslav system of self-management. He carefully describes the manipulation of the councils, the total fragmentation of self-management which allows exploitation and alienated labour. In some cases workers are so placed as to give them a strong role in the exploitation of others, through a favourable contract with other works. Such a system identifies itself with the past, not the future.

THE CRITIQUE OF YUGOSLAVIA

Stojanovic's main theme is the gap between ideals and reality. But there is no gap at all. The 'ideals' of the Yugoslav state are as real as the stones on the beach. They are not virtuous abstractions that float about, destined eventually to be consumed with history. They are the outcome of their historical setting.

It is said that every State gets the government it deserves. Perhaps this is also true of ideology. The lack of workers' autonomy in Yugoslavia is not the outcome of the under-fulfilment of some plan. It is due to the very opposite, to the over-fulfilment of the ideas of the Yugoslav ruling class. Self-management has not meant the expropriation of the power of the State, but the decanting of the problems of the rulers ... onto the workplace. One can overstress the undoubted differences between Yugoslavia and other states in Eastern Europe. On closer examination, when the illusions have been seen through, a capitalist economy, relentless repression of internal dissent, and eternal diplomacy with every bourgeois emissary or tin-pot despot from the Third World are common to all these states. For Stojanovic the question is to re-situate the ideals outside the ideology of contemporary Yugoslav society.

At present an extension of self-management in Yugoslavia would mean an increase in self-alienation. The alternatives are not statism or self-management, just as for Marx the problem was not the alienated thinking of Hegel or that of Feuerbach, but a break with pre-existing systems of philosophy. The real alternative, in both cases, is alienated versus non-alienated production. The alternatives as expressed in Yugoslavia today reflect the split in the ruling class. This is very much a split between local managers and the central bureaucracy. Stojanovic takes the two sides together. He is severely critical both of the Proudhonian-based economics of the decentralising 'anarcho-liberals' and of the statist myth of socialism. But here we find the roots of some confusion. A certain form of collectivism is confused with communism. Thus a managerial form is taken as representative of a social movement.

Returning to the critique of alienation, Stojanovic displays in a well-rounded way the multi-dimensional form of capitalist society, and the absurdity of presenting one axis as crucial. But then he turns on the old self-management /statism axis, slipping into the false orbit of the 'epochal dilemma' of socialism. The ghosts of past critics (Ciliga, Rizzi, Burnham, Machajski) are called upon to enter an old debate. (The first three were oppositional elements to Trotskyism and incorporated many of its assumptions.)

The revolutionary critiques of Russia made by Ruhle, Pannekoek, Bordiga and many others are not mentioned. The terms of 'degeneration' and 'statism' are therefore used to describe the East European states. Old ideas are used to fill in certain gaps. We are told that the restoration of a multi-party system would 'spell catastrophe for (Yugoslavia's) revolution'. What revolution, one might ask? When was there communisation of

(IF I'D KNOWN WHAT A GHASTLY
REGIME I'D BE CREATING IN RUSSIA
I WOULD HAVE RETURNED THAT
RAILWAY TICKET TO THE GERMANS
AND FINISHED THE SEASON SKIING
IN SWITZERLAND)

